

REMARKS/ARGUMENTS

Claims 1-36 are pending in the application. Claims 1, 30, and 32 have been amended to indicate that the data provided on the central database of information contains disparate buyer data including data pertaining to contracts, contacts, sales, shipping, inventory, logistical tracking, invoices, and order history. The amendments are supported at page 4, lines 29-32 of the specification. The title has been amended to better reflect the subject matter of the claims. The abstract has been amended to conform to current USPTO practice.

Information Disclosure Statement

The Examiner indicates that all of the references cited in the specification were not listed in the Information Disclosure Statement dated October 30, 2003. Applicants have reviewed the references cited by the Examiner on form PTO-892 and it appears that the references disclosed in the specification and not cited on Applicants' from PTO-449 have been cited and considered by the Examiner. Therefore, the prior art deemed relevant to Applicants has been considered by the Examiner.

Specification

The Examiner indicates that the title of the invention is not indicative of the claimed invention. Applicants have amended the title to be more indicative of the claims.

Abstract

The Examiner has objected to the abstract due to its form. The abstract has been amended to conform to current USPTO practice with regard to form and the number of words.

Rejection under 35 U.S.C. § 102(e)

Claims 1-36 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 102(e) as being anticipated by U.S. Published Application No. 2003/0009361 to Hancock et al. (hereinafter "Hancock").

The present invention provides a computer-implemented method for maintaining a business relationship between a seller and a buyer. The method includes the steps of:

a) providing a central database of information that contains disparate buyer data on a seller network, the buyer data includes data pertaining to contracts, contacts, sales, shipping, inventory, logistical tracking, invoices, and order history;

b) establishing a buyer access level function on a seller network, wherein the buyer level function allows the seller to provide a buyer with access to a set of buyer data and a set of buyer functions for structuring the set of buyer data;

c) establishing a gatekeeper level function that allows the provision of a gatekeeper buyer contact point on a buyer network with the set of buyer data from the database and the set of buyer functions; and

d) establishing a buyer subordinate level user function that allows the provision of a buyer subordinate level user contact point that provides a buyer subordinate level user with access to selected buyer data from the set of buyer data and selected functions from the selected buyer functions at the buyer subordinate level user contact point.

Hancock discloses a method of interfacing a shipping service. In the method, a logistics node receives a purchase order from a customer. The logistics node selects an appropriate carrier to transport products specified in the purchase order and conveys shipping instructions to the selected carrier. The logistics node also coordinates the shipment by interacting with a source node (associated with a supplier of the products) and a destination node (associated with the recipient of the products).

The present invention is related to method for maintaining a business relationship between a seller and a buyer, while Hancock is limited to a shipping service. Hancock does not disclose or in any way suggest maintaining and providing information at various levels regarding a total business relationship. Hancock is limited to logistics, tracking the shipment of goods, and as such does not touch on many aspects of the overall seller-buyer relationship. For example, the method according to Hancock does not provide access to information regarding contracts and contacts as in the present invention.

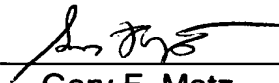
In order to underscore the difference between Hancock and the present invention, the present claims have been amended to indicate that the central database contains disparate buyer data pertaining to contracts, contacts, sales, shipping, inventory, logistical tracking, invoices, and order history.

Because Hancock does not disclose a method of maintaining a business relationship between a seller and a buyer as in the present invention, it can not anticipate the amended claims. Therefore, the rejection under 35 U.S.C. § 102(e) should be withdrawn.

CONCLUSION

In view of the above remarks, Applicants submit that the present application is in condition for allowance. Accordingly, reconsideration and allowance of Claims 1-36 are respectfully requested. If the Examiner is of the opinion that the present application is in condition for other than allowance, he is requested to contact the Applicants' representative at the telephone number given below so that additional changes to the claims may be discussed.

Respectfully submitted,

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